

**□ WASHINGTON, DC – House Majority Leader Steny H. Hoyer (MD) spoke on the House Floor in support of the Eunice Kennedy Shriver Act, which passed the House today and of which he is an original sponsor.□□ Below are his remarks as prepared for delivery:**

“This legislation is named in honor of Eunice Kennedy Shriver, who dedicated her long life to public service, and especially to the inclusion of those with intellectual disabilities. I was proud to call her a friend—but more importantly, she was a friend to millions of people around the world, many of whom never knew her name. We have Eunice Kennedy Shriver to thank, in large part, for the Special Olympics, and for better understanding of the challenges and potential of people with intellectual disabilities. This bill carries on her legacy of inclusion and public service.

“It reauthorizes the Special Olympics Act, which continues grant funding for a remarkable movement that has promoted athletic competition and health for more than four decades. Today, the Special Olympics reach more than 3 million athletes in more than 150 countries. For those athletes, the Special Olympics means the joy of competition and the challenge of pushing themselves to be their very best; and for the rest of us, the Special Olympics has increased respect for people with disabilities.

“This bill also reauthorizes grants to expand the successful Best Buddies program, which is dedicated to the social integration of children and adults with intellectual disabilities. Best Buddies has reached some half a million Americans, both with and without disabilities, promoting friendships and mentorships between participants who range from kindergarteners to adults. Its volunteers gain valuable leadership opportunities, and its participants with disabilities learn that they are valuable members of our communities. It is a valuable part of Eunice Kennedy Shriver’s legacy, one that has found its way to more than a thousand schools and workplaces, and it deserves our support.

“As Mrs. Shriver said about the athletes whose competitions she supported for so many years, ‘Special Olympics athletes are spokespersons for freedom itself—they ask for the freedom to live, the freedom to belong, the freedom to contribute, the freedom to have a chance.’ That should be the goal for every American with a disability, and this bill brings it a little closer to realization. I urge my colleagues to support it.”

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